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We Claim

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

- 1 A method of conveying an email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the intended recipient, including the steps of searching in a database of descriptors and email addresses for the email address associated with said descriptor and, if an email address is located which and where a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database; the descriptor being a combination of one or more identifying elements associated with the intended recipient.
- 2 A system for handling undeliverable electronic mail, including the steps of receiving an email message including an invalid destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address, and if a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, forwarding said email message to a valid email address retrieved from said database according to the result of said search.
- 3 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving an email message forwarded by a sender, the email message including an invalid destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address, and sending a notification message to the sender of said email message, said notification message advising the sender of the results of said database search.
- 4 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving the email message from its sender, the email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the intended recipient, locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the email address associated with said descriptor, and forwarding the message to the email address yielded by the database; the descriptor being a combination of one or more identifying elements associated with the intended recipient.

5 A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the database includes fields corresponding to commonly-used identifiers such as a telephone number, business name, street address, personal name, alias, or nickname.

6 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 4 or 5, wherein the descriptor
5 is selected from a list including a telephone number associated with the intended recipient, a business name associated with said intended recipient, a personal name associated with said intended recipient, and a part of a street address associated with the intended recipient.

7 A method as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the
10 descriptor includes a concatenation of a name and city.

8 A method as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the descriptor includes a concatenation of name and telephone number.

9 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein there is included
15 the step of generating and conveying a return email notification to the sender of the email message, which reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email has been received.

10 A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the return email notification reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email message has been received.

20 11 A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the return email notification also reports when the email message has been received.

12 A method as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the return email notification includes notification of failure to match the descriptor with an email address.

25 13 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein especially formatted email messages are interpreted as database queries and not as email

messages to be readdressed and forwarded.

14 A method of determining an email address including providing a database where email addresses are linked with descriptors relevant for a person at each email address so that a user can provide one or more of the descriptors enabling
5 a search to be conducted of the database to determine the relevant email address, the descriptors including at least one of given name, surname, address, name of business, and/or telephone number; the server being adapted to recognise that the information given in the account name portion of the address was insufficient or not in the correct form for delivery, and passes the necessary
10 message to the operator of the database which locates the correct or complete address, and forwards the message.

15 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is at the server.

16 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is separate from the server.

15 17 A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16, wherein the operator of the database passes the correct or complete address back to the server to enable it to send the message.

18 A database to enable the method of any one of claims 1 to 17 to be performed, the database having fields for email addresses, and separate fields for
20 each of given name, surname, telephone number, name of business and/or address; at least one of the separate fields being completed for each email address.

19 An address system to enable users of computer-based telecommunication systems to independently locate an address of a user, the address system
25 including at least one portion which is the numeric characters of a number of a telecommunications device of the user, the at least one portion being that portion which identifies the user.

- 20 An address system as claimed in claim 19, wherein the number of the telecommunications device includes at least one of the area code within the user's country; the country code of the user's country; or the personal access number within the user's country.
- 5 21 An address system as claimed in claim 19 or claim 20, wherein the computer-based telecommunication system is the internet.
- 22 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 21, wherein the device may be selected from a list including a telephone, facsimile, pager, mobile telephone and satellite connected technology.
- 10 23 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 22, wherein at least one portion of the descriptor is alpha numeric.
- 24 An address system as claimed in claim 23, wherein the alpha includes at least a part of a name of the user.
- 15 25 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein there are provided additional steps including determining from the database if either of the sender or recipient are not a registered user, and forwarding to any such unregistered user information on the system and its advantages and/or a request to register.
- 20 26 A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein an advice is forwarded to the sender or recipient who is a registered user that the information has been forwarded to the unregistered user.
- 27 A method as claimed in claim 25 or claim 26, wherein the information included all necessary documents to enable the unregistered user to become registered as a user.
- 25 28 A method as claimed in claim 27, wherein when the unregistered user is registered as a user, a search is conducted to determine if any messages are

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awaiting forwarding to the user and, if so, to forward to the user any such messages.

29 A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein when a further advice is sent to
the registered user advising the registered user that the unregistered user has
5 become registered.

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